CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 2 August 2001, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Carlos Amat Forés (Cuba)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 880th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

As you will have observed, there is a Japanese television crew in the room to film aspects of today's plenary meeting. This film crew is covering the work of various disarmament bodies for a television programme in its country, under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, on the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Today we have on our list of speakers the distinguished representative of Ukraine, Mr. Mykhailo Skuratovskyi, but before giving him the floor, and with your approval, I think it would be useful to report to the Conference on the consultations which, as President of the Conference, I have been holding during the intersessional period.

As you are aware, the period remaining for our presidency is barely three weeks. We therefore have to be very realistic and objective regarding the goals that we could achieve as we complete our term of office. We have used the intersessional period to begin consultations and it is our intention to contact as many delegations as possible in the next few weeks.

The comments which I am about to make are therefore very preliminary and once we have advanced in our consultations I think that we will have a more complete picture of the positions prevailing among the various members of the Conference.

I can say that so far we have seen many indications of support from all the delegations contacted in the discussions which we have had.

The great majority of delegations have indicated that they think it would be very difficult to make headway on substantive issues in these final weeks of the Conference's work.

Nonetheless, we have seen unanimous interest in maintaining the Conference on Disarmament, particularly its credibility, and in ensuring that it remains the sole multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament. There is a broadly shared position that we should pursue our efforts and not allow ourselves to be discouraged, however complex the circumstances may be.

We have also observed that there is a high level of expectation regarding the possible implications which the current dynamics of international events could have for the work of the Conference. Special attention is being paid by delegations to developments in recent talks taking place at the highest level among the main Powers.

The contacts that we have had as well as the information that we have obtained so far in presidential consultations show that what is referred to as the Amorim proposal continues to enjoy a high level of support as a basis for continuing consultations on the programme of work. With respect to the specific modalities for advancing on this matter there are two basic trends.

(The President)

First of all, a group of countries is of the view that the only viable option for reaching agreement on a programme of work for the Conference is through a package formula that would respect those relations which have been established in practice concerning various substantive issues. The other position is that several delegations are of the view that there are no real possibilities of achieving a package solution and those other delegations are therefore inclined to take up separately some of the substantive items included in the Amorim proposal, starting negotiations on those issues on which it is possible to proceed in this way. We have, moreover, seen that there is broad support by delegations for the work of the three special coordinators who were appointed during the presidency of Ambassador Camilo Reyes, and we have also seen that there is a preparedness to contribute to the work of those three special coordinators.

I will take this opportunity to ask delegations to consider the appropriateness of replying to the questionnaires prepared by the special coordinators and I would also ask them to participate as actively as possible in the consultations which are convened in that connection so as to lay the bases necessary for making headway on these matters.

While the work being done by the three special coordinators is considered highly useful, there is at the same time a clear awareness of the need to advance on the substantive issues which are of interest to all of us and which in the final analysis constitute the very raison d'être of this body.

In the presidential consultations held on Tuesday, the coordinators of the regional groups basically reaffirmed the positions of the respective groups with which we are already familiar. We have taken due note of this and we will bear this in mind in our future work.

To conclude this presentation on the work which, as President of the Conference, I have been doing so far, I would reiterate that we are open to any suggestions or ideas that members of the Conference might have as to the best way of conducting our business over the next few weeks. We think that it is very important to have an open and transparent on-going dialogue among us all.

I now have the honour, having made that report, to call on the di nguished representative of Ukraine, Mr. Mykhailo Skuratovskyi.

Mr. SKURATOVSKYI (Ukraine): Mr. President, allow me to begin by welcoming your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assuring you of full support and cooperation on the part of the delegation of Ukraine.

Our delegation is equally pleased to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to your predecessors for their tireless efforts to move forward the work of the Conference. Likewise, I wish to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, his Deputy, Mr. Roman-Morey, and the staff of the Secretariat for their valuable support to our wok.

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

Mr. President, you have inherited from your predecessors the draft decision on the programme of work, as contained in document CD/1624 which our delegation supported not only as a basis for further intensified consultations but also as a basis for possible consensus. Ukraine attaches importance to a number of particular elements of this package. This position reflects our recognition of the role of the Conference in negotiating many important multilateral agreements that have helped to secure the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as our firm conviction that the Conference is capable of continuing to contribute effectively to strengthening international peace and stability.

The voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons by Ukraine, which exceeded to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon nation in 1994 could hardly be overestimated in the context of the current situation of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

These unprecedented steps in parallel with similar actions by other newly-independent States of the former USSR and a renunciation of national nuclear military programmes by others could serve as an example of great moral significance and political courage to be followed.

Having become one of the legal successors of the former USSR to the START-I Treaty, Ukraine has made a significant reduction in strategic offensive armaments deployed on its territory, which equalled the third largest nuclear arsenal in the world. At present Ukraine has embarked upon the third and final phase of reducing strategic arms, which is to be completed by December this year. We are convinced that the START process should be sustained and developed further by decisive steps on the part of State Parties.

Ukraine realizes the important role which the ABM Treaty has played in the last decades in the system of international legal instruments in the sphere of disarmament and arms control. It should be mentioned that last January the Parliament of Ukraine ratified the Memorandum of Understanding on the ABM Treaty, thus logically continuing the policy of our country aimed at its equal participation in treaties ensuring world strategic stability. We believe that the review of national security strategy in the United States should not lead to a deterioration of global strategic stability and a resumption of the arms race. Ukraine understands the necessity of non-conflict adaptation of the ABM Treaty, taking due account of the problems that emerge in connection with the proliferation of missiles and missile technologies, as well as weapons of mass destruction.

Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to the NPT. Our country, which was an active contributor to the successful outcome of last year's Sixth Review Conference on the NPT, the first review conference since the adoption of the decision to extend the Treaty indefinitely, welcomed the important results of this forum. We attach special importance to the adoption by the Review Conference of the action plan on practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty, which include practical tasks that directly concern the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is rightfully regarded as another key element in the architecture of strategic stability and as a major complementary effort in non-proliferation.

We fully share the opinion that the conclusion of the CTBT is standing proof of the continuing relevance of the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The initial role of the Treaty is significant in its essence: to stop or considerably restrain the nuclear weapon States from upgrading their nuclear arsenals and to prevent the emergence of new Nuclear Weapon States.

Last November the Parliament of Ukraine adopted laws on the ratification of the CTBT and on the ratification of the agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO on activities relating to international monitoring facilities for the CTBT.

We hope that the necessary steps to ratify the CTBT will be taken by all nuclear-weapon nations, which is crucial in the light of their obligation under article VI of the NPT, and this would substantially promote the ratification of the Treaty by other States Parties upon which the entry into force of the CTBT depends.

Another clear priority in the advancement of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is negotiations on a fissile material cut-of treaty (FMCT). This treaty, in our view, would provide valuable security benefits to both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. It is discouraging, especially for the Ukrainian delegation, which presided in 1998 at the time when the Conference established the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate an FMCT, to note that such negotiations have not progressed.

This particular deadlock in our work might be caused by a lack of the necessary confidence between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. Our delegation remains committed to negotiating an FMCT and stands ready to participate in this process.

At the same time, we recognize that other aspects of item 1 of the Conference's agenda deserve our attention as well. The Conference has its undeniable role to play in promoting nuclear disarmament, keeping in mind that such a role should be constructive and beneficial to all members of the international community.

Mr. President, to be efficient, the Conference may establish subsidiary bodies by a decision in accordance with the rules of procedure. We all understand that distinctions between the names of the subsidiary bodies are not clear-cut and allow a wide margin of flexibility to reflect the level of political significance of an issue to be negotiated to demonstrate that some items are ripe for negotiations, and because some preparatory pre-negotiation work is necessary with regard to some other issues.

(Mr. Skuratovskyi, Ukraine)

We regret that in the past few years the Conference has missed the opportunity to establish such subsidiary bodies as working groups, technical groups or groups of governmental experts that have proven to be particularly suitable for pre-negotiation activities on technically complex and politically controversial issues.

We applauded the outcome of the efforts of our former President that resulted in the appointment of three special coordinators. However, we reluctantly accept the practice of appointing special coordinators by decision of the Conference and negotiating the mandate of their activities. There is no mention of special coordinators in the Conference's rules of procedure and they should not be regarded as some kind of low-profile subsidiary mechanism. Their tasks and responsibilities are formulated in document CD/1036. The President of the CD is entitled to appoint special coordinators but before proceeding to such appointments the President should secure consensus support from delegations. In this particular case, consensus means that all delegations agree that a particular issue is relevant to its agenda and as such could be considered by the Conference. The aim of a special coordinator's work is to seek the views of delegations and to prepare a mandate of the subsidiary body acceptable to all. Special coordinators on specific issues should be appointed by this procedure.

To give more weight and significance to decisions to be adopted by the Conference on the establishment of subsidiary bodies and on their mandates, their drafting being normally very time-consuming, we propose to include in such decisions a provision stating that a subsidiary body will perform its work until it fulfils its mandate or at least until one delegation withdraws its support for a previously adopted decision.

It is vital for the Conference, in our opinion, to leave behind the practice of annually reopening the same procedural discussions which distract us from reaching agreement on how to deal with substantive issues. The delegations' work should cease concealing itself behind the anonymous façade of presidential consultations. Other options and formats of substantive discussions should be explored, including those proposed by the Foreign Minister of Ukraine in his address to the Conference on 9 March last year. For our part, we are open to the various initiatives put forward by our colleagues with the aim of making the Conference more operational and effective. We believe that such an exploration by joint efforts focusing on the specific interests of individual participants would allow us to change things for the better.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. MAIOLINI (Italy): Since I am taking the floor for the first time since your accession to the presidency, Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you and to assure you of the complete cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of your high responsibilities. I took note with appreciation of your intensive consultations to reach a consensus formula on the three outstanding issues which always deserve our utmost attention.

(Mr. Maiolini, Italy)

Furthermore, let me commend the work done so far by the three special coordinators on the reform of the Conference. All of them have submitted letters to the delegations to the Conference, assessing the issues and possibilities within their respective competence, giving information, and sometimes an evaluation, on these very issues. Two of the special coordinators have been asking delegations for written contributions. To these requests Italy has replied promptly, offering its preliminary ideas.

Briefly, as far as the agenda is concerned, my delegation has stated its opinion on the following points: respect of the Decalogue; introduction of the principle of the automatic elimination from the agenda of those items for which there have not been proposals for the appointment of subsidiary bodies or special coordinators for many years (this would apply in the case of the present agenda to some items like item 2: on the prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, and item 5: new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons as well as radiological weapons); the automatic inclusion in the agenda of any item assigned to the Conference by a consensual resolution of the United Nations General Assembly; and updating of the current agenda through the inclusion in it of current issues (this could apply on the basis of consensus, for example, to missile proliferation and to regional disarmament).

As concerns the expansion of membership of the Conference, my delegation has expressed its positive position. We not only support the membership of the four remaining members of the European Union but are also not against the principle of the universalization of our body. For us, democracy is not in contrast with efficiency. In any case, with 22 applications for membership, we cannot keep to the *status quo*. In the case of a consensual decision for only a limited expansion of the membership, we would support the criteria that new members should be considered according to priority based on the date of application for membership and according to the interest shown by the applicants as observers in the work of the Conference.

On the issue of the effective functioning of the Conference, the invitation of the special coordinator is to take part today in the next informal consultations. It is an invitation which we gladly accept.

Mr. President, the reform of the Conference just now is the only active item on our agenda, so we have decided that it is up to us to make it a success and to strive for it. We therefore have to engage all our efforts in favour of an open debate, flexible positions, good will and political determination to push ahead three interlinked subjects which might ease our activity in the Conference.

We know that when there is the necessary political will, member States will strike deals, even without the reform of the Conference, and we know as well that when there is no political will, no reform of the Conference could ever be effective enough. But in the case of reform, Mr. President, we are far from those extreme situations. We are in the grey area where our activity will benefit from more simple procedures, from a larger participation of the international community, and from an automatically updated agenda.

(Mr. Maiolini, Italy)

Burdensome procedures and time-consuming rules and procedures do not serve us well. For this reason, Mr. President, allow me to encourage all my distinguished colleagues fully to engage their delegations in the forthcoming discussions.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Italy for his statement and the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair. We are sure that he has been heard with keen interest because these are points which are actually before us for consideration at this time.

I do not have any other speakers on my list for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor.

That does not seem to be the case, and I would not wish to carry on and miss the opportunity to extend on behalf of us all a cordial welcome to the distinguished representative of Bangladesh, Ambassador Ali, who is taking part for the first time in the plenary of our Conference. You may be sure, Ambassador, that we shall extend to you our fullest cooperation and support and that we look forward to hearing the always important statements from your country to which we have become accustomed at this Conference. You are very welcome to our Conference.

The representative of Bangladesh has the floor.

Mr. ALI (Bangladesh): Thank you, Mr. President, for your warm words welcoming me to this meeting. May I, at the same time, take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chair. It is a privilege to attend a meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, a body devoted to a noble task and lofty ideals. I am also honoured to represent my Government in this important negotiating body. For Bangladesh, issues of disarmament are vital. Our first and foremost priority is economic development. The Government and the people of Bangladesh would like to see all available resources, both manpower and material, addressing our need for social and economic development. In our view, the concept of disarmament plays a vital role in this process. It is through disarmament that resources can be released for advancing the welfare of humankind.

I look forward to working closely with all my distinguished colleagues in this Chamber. It shall be my endeavour, during the period that I represent Bangladesh in this august body, to try my utmost to advance the goals and objectives of this body. May I also assure you, Mr. President, of the full cooperation of my delegation in your efforts to advance the agenda of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the distinguished representative of Bangladesh for his statement and the kind words which he has addressed to the Chair.

Distinguished colleagues, you may recall that at the 871st plenary meeting, on 22 March 2001, the President of the Conference informed us that he had received a note verbale from the Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stating that it had

(The President)

decided not to take on the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for the period from 20 August to 31 December 2001. Accordingly, the President requested the Secretariat to approach the next country on the list of members of the Conference, namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to ascertain whether it would be prepared to assume the presidency for this period. Last Tuesday, the Secretariat informed us that it had received a letter from the Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo informing it that his delegation would not be in a position to assume the presidency of the Conference.

In light of the above, and in accordance with the rules of procedure and with established practice, the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during the period from 20 August to 31 December 2001 shall be assumed by the next country on the list of members of the Conference, namely, Ecuador.

I should now like to invite you to take a decision on the request of Saudi Arabia to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference during this session, without having first considered it in an informal plenary. Copies of this request have been placed earlier in delegations' boxes and are also before you now in document CD/WP.519.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite Saudi Arabia to participate as an observer in our work, in accordance with our rules of procedure?

It is so decided.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

That does not appear to be the case.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to recall that, as announced at the presidential consultations on Tuesday, the special coordinator, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, will convene, immediately after this plenary meeting, informal open-ended consultations on improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament.

This concludes our business for today. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 9 August 2001, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.